

Year of the Caribou or the Year of the Asparagus. We're not a fad, fancy or a year."

That is classic for Senator MIKULSKI.

Today there are a record 20 female Members in the Senate, but BARBARA would be the first to point out that is still a minority, and we can do better. Well, after 40 years in Congress, Senator MIKULSKI will be sorely missed. Without the leadership and determination of Senator MIKULSKI, the fight gets a little harder, and there is plenty of work to do.

Women still receive an average of 78 cents for every dollar earned by men, and it is even greater for women of color. African-American women make 64 cents for every dollar earned by men, and Hispanic women only make 56 cents. It is not right, and it is long past time that Congress pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to provide women with the necessary tools to fight wage discrimination. It is also time to guarantee paid family and medical leave for all. Making this a reality will mean that when major life events happen, birth of a new child or caring for an aging parent, hard-working Americans will not have to choose between their family and debt, bankruptcy, or losing their job. But America can overcome these challenges. We have done it before. Just look how far we have come.

Here are just a few of the problems women faced and overcame since the 1970s: women could be fired from the workplace for being pregnant; sexual harassment wasn't recognized in the workplace; women couldn't get a credit card; and marital rape wasn't considered a crime in most States. But we solved these discriminatory and heinous practices. You see, America's democracy has indeed been imperfect, but throughout our history, we have sought to address our Nation's imperfections. Because the story of the United States is not a story of a perfect union, it is a story about the pursuit to create "a more perfect union."

Let me close with this. Years ago, in my home State of Illinois, then First Lady Hillary Clinton said: "If you go to the poorest places on Earth struggling from social problems of poverty, disease, and hunger and all that comes with it, and you can only ask one question to determine if they have a chance, the question you should ask is this: How do you treat your women?"

If you give women an equal playing field, status, education, and opportunity, you are giving them and your country a chance to thrive.

This March, as we pay tribute to all the brave women who have moved this country forward and in doing so inspired each and every one of us, let's challenge ourselves to build on their legacies and make our country a more equal society for our mothers, sisters, and daughters.

TRIBUTE TO DON HOOPER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to recognize Don Hooper,

a great Vermonter who is soon to retire from the National Wildlife Federation.

Don is a great environmental conservationist whose advice I have sought for at least 20 years on issues affecting Vermont, the United States, and indeed the planet. For 17 years, Don has helped lead the National Wildlife Federation, NWF, in Vermont and the region. He helped to bring the peregrine falcon back from the brink of extinction in Vermont and to restore our State's breeding population of bald eagles. Beyond Vermont, he advocated for piping plovers, wolves, Atlantic salmon, and more. Don helped the NWF become one of the first organizations to sound the alarm about the accelerating impacts of climate change and to pull together coalitions of environmental advocates, conservationists, and sportsmen and sportswomen to push for solutions.

Don's public service extends beyond his conservation leadership. He worked hard in the mid-1990s as Vermont's Secretary of State to reduce barriers to the ballot box and to make government more open and accessible, priorities both he and I share.

Many Vermonters also celebrate Don's 8 years representing the towns of Randolph, Brookfield, and Braintree in Vermont's General Assembly, when Don led efforts to divest pension funds from South African investments, helped to craft significant environmental and planning legislation, and achieved what would be unthinkable in most States—a political redistricting map that was adopted by near consensus.

And as is the story with any great Vermonter, Don's foundation has been his family. Since 1974, the Hooper's Brookfield farm, worked by Don, his wife, Allison, and sons, Sam, Jay, and Miles, has been a mainstay of the community. They have sold hay, vegetables, goat's milk, and meat from the farm to friends and neighbors. Don helped found the Montpelier Farmers Market that Marcelle and I visit whenever we are home in the summer. With Allison in the lead and Don doing much heavy lifting and dishwashing, the Hoopers became cheesemakers and founded the Vermont Butter and Cheese Company, which has thrived for 32 years, employs 77 people directly, supports many more Vermont farmers, and has Vermont's specialty cheese industry on the international culinary map.

On top of all of this, Don is a volunteer for the fire department and a member of the local Farm Bureau. It is hard to think of a more dedicated member of the community.

These are just some of the layers of Don's life in Vermont. He has also done great work as a Peace Corps volunteer in Botswana and in the leadership of national organizations. Don Hooper stands as tall as ever in retirement, and while this might conclude his leadership of the NWF in Vermont, I know

it will not be the last we hear and see of this great Vermonter.

RECOGNIZING THE "USS MONTPELIER"

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as a native of Montpelier and as one who attended the christening of the USS *Montpelier*, I was so happy to see an article in the Times Argus regarding its return to the United States after a 6-month deployment last month. Steve Martin and Debra Smith have both been involved for years and supported the crew of the USS *Montpelier*. Marcelle and I had a memorable time at a picnic they held for the crew in Middlesex. As a Vermonter, they both make me proud, and I wanted my fellow Senators to see what they have done.

I ask unanimous consent that the Times Argus article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Times Argus, Feb. 8, 2016]

USS MONTPELIER RETURNS TO STATES

(By Josh O'Gorman)

NORFOLK, Va.—The USS *Montpelier* has returned home to the United States following a six-month deployment.

Friday afternoon, the submarine—the third naval vessel to share the name of Vermont's capital—docked at Naval Station Norfolk after logging more than 38,000 nautical miles during its most recent deployment.

The crew of the Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine, which includes 15 officers and 129 enlisted crew, spent the recent deployment supporting national security interests in Europe and the Middle East, with stops in Bahrain, France, Greece and the United Arab Emirates.

"I have been connected with this amazing group of men for 14 or 15 years now," said Debra Smith, of Middlesex, who chairs the Veterans and Family Support Committee for the Montpelier VFW.

Smith's support for the sailors of the USS *Montpelier* began with her efforts to keep them entertained while at sea. Smith, who used to operate Capital Video in Montpelier before it closed, would send the sailors movies to watch during their down time.

Most recently, Smith organized an effort in which students from Hardwick Elementary School are making "Welcome Home" and Valentine's Day cards, which are expected to go out in the mail to the crew this week.

Both Smith and Steve Martin, also of Middlesex, have been passengers of the 360-foot submarine, which was commissioned in 1993 and which launched the first Tomahawk cruise missiles during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

"It was pretty awesome," Martin said. "It's pretty tight in there. We spent the day out at sea and when they surfaced we were able to go up on the bridge with the captain."

He also described the steepness with which the submarine dives and surfaces.

"You're keeping your balance and your face is a few feet from the floor," Martin said.

Next month, Smith and Martin will take a road trip that will include a stop in Norfolk to visit the boat and its crew.

REMOVAL OF NOMINATION
OBJECTION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on December 18, 2015, I placed a hold on the nomination of Dr. Janine Ann Davidson to be Under Secretary of the Navy. As I made clear in my statement at that time, my action was not directed at Dr. Davidson; rather, it was directed at the pending promotion by the Navy of RDML Brian Losey and concerns I had related to findings by the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General concerning Rear Admiral Losey's retaliation against whistleblowers. I have been informed by the Navy that Rear Admiral Losey will not be promoted. Consequently, I am removing my hold on Dr. Davidson's nomination and will support her confirmation.

To quickly review why I took this action, the DOD OIG conducted several extensive investigations into allegations of retaliation by Rear Admiral Losey against senior members of his joint command. In three of those investigations, the DOD IG concluded that he wrongfully retaliated against his staff even after he was advised not to do so. The DOD IG also concluded that his immediate subordinates carried out retaliatory actions at his behest in two of those cases.

I found the OIG findings compelling. In a January 14, 2016, letter to Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, Senator McCAIN and Senator REED, in their capacity as chairman and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, also cited the OIG findings in support of their request to Secretary Mabus that Losey not be promoted.

Notwithstanding Rear Admiral Losey's long service to our country, the Navy would have been wrong to dismiss the OIG findings and promote him. Doing so would have sent exactly the wrong message, namely that retaliation against whistleblowers is acceptable.

One of the pillars of our system of government is the rule of law; a principle that applies no less to our military and to the vital principle of civilian control over the military. It is illegal to retaliate against whistleblowers, whether civilian or military, and I commend the DOD inspector general and his staff for their diligence in these investigations.

I commend Secretary Mabus and the Navy for taking what I believe is the right course of action in this situation, but my concern with the protection of whistleblowers did not begin with the Losey case, and it will not end with the Losey case. I will continue to work here in the Senate to ensure that those who come forward to expose waste, fraud, or abuse are protected.

In the meantime, I encourage the nominee, Dr. Janine Ann Davidson, to focus on the hard work she has before her in addressing whistleblower retaliation issues in the military.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, today the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation approved legislation to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration. I applaud the work of my colleagues Senators THUNE and NELSON. Their leadership on this important legislation was critical. I would like to make clear that, while we took important steps forward with this legislation, more work remains to be done to ensure the United States remains a global leader in aviation, safety, and innovation.

Going into this year, many on the Commerce Committee, along with Department of Transportation Secretary Foxx and FAA Administrator Huerta and key stakeholders, aimed high on FAA reauthorization. We aimed high because there are big ideas we need to address when it comes to aviation in this country.

From the current state and financing of our airport infrastructure, to completing NextGen implementation, to accelerating commercial use of UAS technology, to new proposals about our Air Traffic Control system, there were a lot of innovative ideas on the table, and while we made strides on some, more work remains to be done. There is widespread agreement that the status quo is not acceptable, and I was pleased to join my colleagues in taking this initial step forward to reauthorize the FAA for the upcoming 18 months.

Furthermore, I am pleased that I was able to put forth amendments that were included in this bill to ensure adequate staffing levels at the Newark air traffic control tower. In addition, we were able to secure a much-needed study of the New York and New Jersey airports, which cover the busiest airspace in the country. Findings from this study will enable us to make informed decisions about how best to address this staffing problem in the future.

I am also concerned about staffing levels at the Transportation Security Administration, TSA. There have been incredibly long delays at Newark airport because of inadequate staffing of TSA agents at our airport. Safety is absolutely paramount in our airports. It is my hope that we can achieve both topnotch security and an efficient, reliable process for travelers using our airports. Increased staffing should help us achieve that goal.

In this reauthorization, I was pleased to work with Senator CANTWELL to increase competition in the Newark airport with the hope that increased competition and opening up more flight slots at the airport may yield more options and price points for consumers. But I must stress that these changes cannot move forward without ensuring the airport is equipped to handle more traffic and passengers. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on this issue and am excited by the opportunities this could bring for my constituents.

We also made progress on furthering the integration of unmanned aerial systems, UAS, or drones into our airspace in our legislation. This technology is literally taking off around the world. It has the power to enhance search and rescue, deliver humanitarian aid, improve agriculture practices, and newsgathering. I introduced the Commercial UAS Modernization Act to help advance this technology and was pleased to see many of our ideas incorporated in this legislation. I worked with committee leadership to further advance a microUAS rule, which would allow U.S. businesses to fly micro-drones under 4.4 pounds responsibly and safely.

Advancing microUAS use will bring tremendous innovations and new efficiencies across the country and will keep the United States on par with other developed nations who have been making great strides ahead of us in utilizing this technology. From improving research to providing unmanned bridge inspections, the benefits of this technology are truly limitless. UAS has the power to save lives and create new efficiencies across industries. I am excited to see what the innovators and entrepreneurs come up with as a result of our rule which sets forth clear safety guidelines for responsible operation.

Finally, I want to address a couple of amendments that I put forth that were not included in this legislation and express my sincere hope that the chairman and ranking member will work with me before this bill gets to floor. I introduced two amendments to the bill that would address disadvantaged business enterprise, or DBE, projects. The goal of this program, of course, is to promote equity and inclusion in federally financed transportation projects. While neither of these amendments were incorporated into this legislation as of yet, I am confident that we can work together to advance this important policy goal. One amendment would ensure conformance of the DOT size standard for small businesses to the metric defined by the Small Business Administration.

This update will enable more minority and women-owned businesses to compete for infrastructure work. The second amendment sets goals for minority and women-owned businesses on projects financed only by passenger facility charges, or PFCs. I ask the chairman and ranking member to continue to work with me as this bill goes to the floor to advance these two important goals.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE ENZI

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, on March 29 in Laramie, the University of Wyoming will recognize the work of Senator MIKE ENZI with an official dedication of the Michael B. Enzi STEM Facility. It is a well-deserved honor and one that I would like to share with my fellow Senators.